



Oregon School Activities Association

25200 SW Parkway Avenue, Suite 1
Wilsonville, OR 97070
503.682.6722 <http://www.osaa.org>



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To: Athletic Directors and Head XC Coaches

From: Kelly Foster, Assistant Executive Director
kellyf@osaa.org | 503.682.6722 x233

Subject: 2026-27 Cross Country Reminders

Included within this memo are reminders regarding OSAA policies and NFHS rules specific to Cross Country that each coaching staff should review as we begin a new season. The links provided will take you directly to more detailed information regarding that specific reminder. Each school offering Cross Country should have received one copy of the NFHS Track and Field and Cross Country Rules Book from the OSAA, and if your Athletic Director has your email address listed on the OSAA website under your school, you will be able to have one NFHS eBook of the rules. If your school didn't receive your copy, please let me know. Feel free to contact me if you have questions and best of luck this season!

GENERAL INFORMATION

OSAA Cross Country Plan Book

<https://www.osaa.org/docs/planbooks/xcplan.pdf>

The 2025 OSAA Cross Country Plan Book is available on the OSAA website. This plan book contains information regarding important season dates, NFHS rules information, OSAA Cross Country rules and policies, state championship information and qualifications, etc.

Health and Safety Information

<http://www.osaa.org/health-safety>

The OSAA website contains a variety of information regarding heat and hydration, lightning safety, air quality, and concussion management. This page contains links to informational items that all coaches should familiarize themselves with as practices begin.

Heat Index Alerts

<http://www.osaa.org/heat-index>

ADs and coaches should subscribe to heat alerts through the OSAA website. Alerts are sent about 11am daily when the forecasted heat index in your area is high. If an alert is received, OSAA policy requires that schools check the actual heat index within one hour prior to the start of practice to determine if modifications must be made. If no alert is received, no further action is required by the school that day.

New Synthetic Turf Field - Heat Guidance

<http://www.osaa.org/heat-index>

The OSAA's Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) has produced guidance for use of turf fields when it's warm outside. Synthetic turf field surface temperatures can reach up to 200 degrees Fahrenheit, which not only increases the risk of heat illness, but may cause burns to exposed skin. Radiant heat from the synthetic surface can have a "heat island" effect that may not be accounted for if Heat Index is checked by local Zip Code.

The following guidelines should be considered when practicing, working out, or playing contests on synthetic turf from May 1 through September 30 when the outdoor temperature exceeds 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperature should be measured on-site within one hour of the start of the event and monitored for the duration of the event.

1. If outdoor temperature is greater than 80 degrees Fahrenheit coaches should be aware of increased risk and observe athletes for signs of heat illness. Additional rest, water, and shade breaks should be utilized as needed.
2. If outdoor temperature is greater than 90 degrees Fahrenheit consider avoiding the use of synthetic turf fields between peak sun times of noon to 3pm.
3. If outdoor temperature is greater than 95 degrees Fahrenheit consider moving all practices, workouts, and contests to natural grass fields.

Air Quality Guidelines

<http://www.osaa.org/health-safety/air-quality>

it's important to review the updated [Air Quality Guidelines](#), which were revised in June 2026. School personnel are required to use the AirNow Fire and Smoke Map at <https://fire.airnow.gov>, which includes circles for DEQ/AirNow monitors and squares for Purple Air monitors. The policy still allows schools to participate in practices/contests up to an AQI of 150. Cancellation is required for outdoor events when AQI reaches 151 (red). The policy suggests schools consider the impact of elevated AQI lasting for multiple days and the impact of prolonged exposure for athletes and staff on multiple practice session days when making decisions.

Pre-Event Safety Timeout

<https://www.osaa.org/health-safety/pre-event-safety>

Prior to the start of each contest (at all levels) the site supervisor and/or home head coach shall gather the following personnel to review these questions; Site Supervisor, Coaches, Officials, and Medical Personnel.

- ✓ **Who is the onsite contact for each school?**
- ✓ **Is there a qualified medical professional present? If not, who will lead in case of an emergency?**
- ✓ **Is there an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for the venue? Who calls 911 and who meets the ambulance (and where)?**
- ✓ **Where's the nearest AED?**
- ✓ **Environmental concerns? (heat index, air quality, lightning)**
- ✓ **Contest Interruption Policy: Cover policy and who officials are communicating with if behavior is reported to them**

Practice Model

<https://www.osaa.org/docs/handbooks/osaahandbook.pdf#page=109>

The Practice Model requires athletes to have a **minimum of five days** of actual practice prior to participation in a jamboree or interscholastic contest. Please familiarize yourself with this policy. Notable requirements contained in the policy include:

- ✓ Prohibition on consecutive days of multiple practice sessions
- ✓ A teaching session as one of the practice sessions on the first two multiple practice days (the intensity, duration and pace of all practice components in a teaching session shall be modified from a normal practice session)
- ✓ Maximum of one hour of weight training before or after practice on a single practice session day

2026-27 NFHS Track & Field / Cross Country Rule Changes

See the [NFHS website](#) for a complete list of changes.

State Championships Seeding Criteria

Members Per Committee

6A - 1 coach per league, per gender + OACA Rep

5A - 1 coach per league + OACA Rep

4A - 1 coach per league + OACA Rep

3A - 1 coach per district + OACA Rep

2A/1A - 1 coach per district + OACA Rep

Ineligible Coaches - *A coach cannot be a league/district representative on the At-Large committee if they have a team (boys and/or girls) in the At-Large Pool.*

Process for Choosing the Committee Members

1. Each league/district will be responsible for choosing their own representative(s).
 - A. A list of substitute coach representatives must be created so that they can be on the committee in the case that a current committee member has a team in the At-Large Pool.

Determining Eligible Teams

1. Based on District Meet finish placements
 - A. 6A, 5A, & 2A/1A Boys - Only third and fourth place teams from each district qualifying event may be considered for at-large berths.
 - i. 6A - 14 eligible teams for two (2) spots
 - ii. 5A - 10 eligible teams for two (2) spots
 - iii. 2A/1A Boys - 12 eligible teams for two (2) spots
 - B. 4A, 3A, & 2A/1A Girls - Only third, fourth, and fifth place teams from each league/district qualifying event may be considered for at-large berths.
 - i. 4A - 18 eligible teams for six (6) spots
 - ii. 3A - 8 eligible teams for one (1) spot
 - iii. 2A/1A Girls - 12 eligible teams for three (3) spots

Criteria for Choosing Teams

1. Order of finish at district meet (ex. a fourth-place team is only eligible if that district's third place team has been chosen for an at-large berth).
2. Eligible team's district championship team score compared to automatic qualifying teams in the district.
3. Strength of the district based on state meet results from the previous year.
4. Head-to-head competition with more consideration given to meets later in the season, as available.

Process for Choosing Teams

1. After all district meets have been completed and results posted to athletic.net:
 - A. OSAA will host a virtual meeting to include committee members as well as OSAA staff and a representative from Athletic.net.
 - B. The OACA Rep will serve as the moderator of the discussion and will compile results.
 - C. The pool of eligible teams will be compiled by the OSAA and sent to the committees prior to the meeting.
 - D. Committee discusses strengths of each team.
 - E. After discussion is complete, the committee will narrow down the list to the number of at-large bids plus two, all committee members will then rank each team based on the number of teams remaining in the pool.
 - i. Example - 6A has 14 eligible teams (two per league) – the committee will narrow that list down to six (four at-large + two), then each member will rank their 1st choice with six, their 2nd choice with five, third choice with a four, etc. all the way down to one.
 - F. The OACA rep will vote, but their votes will only be used in the case of a tie for the final at-large berth.
 - G. Points are tabulated by the OACA Rep and OSAA and at-large berths will be assigned accordingly.